

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SOFIA 01092 081506Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 SY-05 PA-01
PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 DODE-00 HA-05 /061 W
-----115566 091214Z /72

R 081320Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4703
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USNATO

S E C R E T SOFIA 1092

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PINS, BU, US
SUBJECT: BULGARIAN TELEVISION PRODUCER REPORTEDLY ARRESTED FOR
ESPIONAGE ON BEHALF OF US

1. EMBASSY WAS TOLD BY BULGARIAN SOURCE JUNE 7 AND
YUGOSLAV SOURCE JUNE 8 THAT BULGARIAN TELEVISION EDITOR-
IN-CHIEF AND PROMINENT PRODUCER TOMA TOMOV WAS ARRESTED
JUNE 6 AT SOFIA AIRPORT BY STATE SECURITY AND CHARGED
WITH ESPIONAGE ON BEHALF OF THE US. TOMOV REPORTEDLY
HAD 30,000 BULGARIAN LEVA IN HIS HAND LUGGAGE AND WAS
PLANNING TO FOLLOW THE DEFECTOR'S PATH TO THE WEST TAKEN
IN JULY 1977 BY RABOTNICHESKO DELO CORRESPONDENT VLADIMIR KOSTOV.
TOMOV HAD REPORTEDLY BEEN SUSPECTED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS
AND HAD BEEN UNDER SURVEILLANCE.

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PAGE 02 SOFIA 01092 081506Z

2. IF REPORT IS TRUE, IT IS MOST INTERESTING. TOMA
NIKOLOV TOMOV IS KNOWN AS A FRIEND AND PROTEGE OF
ZHIVKOV'S SON-IN-LAW, BULGARIAN TELEVISION GENERAL DIRECTOR
IVAN SLAVKOV, WHO , HOWEVER, BELIEVED TO BE NO LONGER
LIVING WITH HIS WIFE, ZHIVKOV'S DAUGHTER, CULTURE CHAIRMAN
LYUDMILA ZHIVKOVA. TOMOV, 36 AND A BULGARIAN COMMUNIST

PARTY (BCP) MEMBER, IS ALSO CONSIDERED TO BE FAR AND AWAY BULGARIA'S BEST TELEVISION JOURNALIST. HE CURRENTLY PRODUCES A WEEKLY FEATURE NEWS PROGRAM CALLED "SVETUT V DEISTVIE," ("THE WORLD IN ACTION") WHICH DEALS WITH CURRENT WORLD ISSUES. TONE OF TOMOV'S PRODUCTIONS IS MORE BALANCED AND OBJECTIVE AND STYLE MORE CONTEMPORARY THAN BULGARIAN TELEVISION'S STODGY, PREACHY NORM. TOMOV IS ALSO NOT TYPICAL OF BULGARIA'S YOUNG COMMUNIST HIGH-ROLLING ELITE; HE DOES NOT DRINK OR SMOKE AND IS A VEGETARIAN.

3. TOMOV HAS HAD SUBSTANTIAL CONTACT WITH THE UNITED STATES. HE HAS VISITED FOUR TIMES IN PAST SIX YEARS, COVERING THE 1972 AND 1976 ELECTIONS, COMING ON DEPARTMENT GRANT IN 1974, AND, IN 1977, ACCOMPANYING LYUDMILA ZHIVKOVA ON HER VISIT TO OPEN THE THRACIAN EXHIBIT, SIGN THE CULTURAL AGREEMENT, AND TRAVEL AROUND THE US. WHEN HE RETURNED, A QUITE REASONABLE FILM OF THE US HE MADE DURING THE VISIT INAUGURATED HIS SERIES "SVETUT V DEISTVIE". SINCE THEN HE HAS TWICE ASKED THE EMBASSY FOR FILM CLIPS OR PHOTOGRAPHS OF MODERNUS WEAPONS FOR USE IN A PROGRAM ON US AND SOVIET ARMAMENTS. EMBASSY FINESSED BOTH REQUESTS, SEEING NO POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE TO THE US IN SUCH A PROGRAM PRODUCED IN BULGARIA.

3. EMBASSY IS STILL BYNO MEANS CERTAIN THAT REPORT OF TOMOV ARREST IS ACCURATE. AS OF EVENING OF JUNE 7,
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PAGE 03 SOFIA 01092 081506Z

TOMOV HIMSELF ANSWERED HIS TELEPHONE AT BULGARIAN TELEVISION AND APPEARS STILL TO BE WORKING THERE (WHICH WOULD NOT, HOWEVER, PRECLUDE HIS HAVING BEEN ARRESTED). GOB COULD BE KEEPING MATTER ON ICE, SAVING A POSSIBLE TRIAL UNTIL AFTER SOVIET DISSIDENT TRIALS, FOR EXAMPLE. ANOTHER MORE AD HOMINEM EXPLANATION COULD BE THAT TOMOV IS OUT TO BE USED TO DUMP SLAVKOV, TURING OUT SOME RASCALS AND RIDDING MRS. ZHIVKOVA OF AN EMBARRASSING HUSBAND. IF LATTER IS THE CASE, OFFICIAL CHARGE, IF ANY, IS LIKELY TO BE "ECONOMIC ESPIONAGE," (WHICH MEANS BRIBERY OR OTHER FINANCIAL CORRUPTION HERE) AND US CONNECTION IS NOT LIKELY TO BE IMPUTED. LATTER INTERPRETATION WOULD BE MORE CONSISTENT WITH PRESENT GENERALLY MORE POSITIVE TREND IN US/BULGARIAN RELATIONS.
GARTHOFF

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TELEVISION, ESPIONAGE, ALLEGATIONS, ARRESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SOFIA01092
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780241-0625
Format: TEL
From: SOFIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780681/aaaacrkf.tel
Line Count: 109
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a11d408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2436429
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BULGARIAN TELEVISION PRODUCER REPORTEDLY ARRESTED FOR ESPIONAGE ON BEHALF OF US
TAGS: PINR, PINS, BU, US, (TOMOV, TOMA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a11d408f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014